The Claims:

1. (Original) A vertebral implant for interposition between two vertebral endplates comprising:

a tubular body sized to fit between the two vertebral endplates;

a pair of ring-shaped cleat assemblies, each cleat assembly comprising an outer end wall, an inner end wall, and a side wall which defines a hollow bore,

wherein one or more spikes extend from each outer end wall, and wherein each hollow bore is sized to fit over an end of the tubular body and slidably pass from the end along at least a portion of the length of the tubular body.

2. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein prior to interposition between the two vertebral endplates, the tubular body is slidably passed through the hollow bores in each of the cleat assemblies and wherein the spikes on each outer end wall are directed away from each other and extend toward opposite ends of the tubular body without extending past the opposite ends of the tubular body.

3. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 further comprising an attachment assembly for attaching the tubular body to the cleat assemblies, the attachment assembly comprising:

one or more apertures extending through the side walls of each of the cleat assemblies;

an attachment member extendable through one of the one or more apertures into contact with the tubular body.

4. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 3 wherein the one or more apertures is threaded and the attachment member is a set screw.

5. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein one or more openings extend through the side walls of each of the cleat assemblies, the openings sized to permit graft material

entry into the hollow bore.

6. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein the inner end wall of each of the cleat assemblies is provided with one or more alignment positions for aligning and positioning the cleat assemblies.

7. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein for at least one of the cleat assemblies, the outer end wall is angled with respect to the inner end wall.

8. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein the end walls of the cleat assemblies are furrowed.

9. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein the hollow bore of each cleat assembly is smooth.

10. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein the hollow bore has a diameter between 13 mm and 25 mm.

11. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 7 wherein the angle between the outer end wall and the inner end wall is between 4 and 15 degrees.

12. (Original) A vertebral implant for interposition between two vertebral endplates comprising:

a biologic strut sized to fit between the two vertebral endplates;

a pair of ring-shaped cleat assemblies, each cleat assembly comprising an outer end wall, an inner end wall, and a sidewall which defines a hollow bore,

wherein one or more spikes extend from each outer end wall, and wherein each hollow bore is sized to fit over an end of the biologic strut and slidably pass from the end along at least a portion

of the length of the biologic strut.

13. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 12 further including at least one threaded aperture through each sidewall and a set screw extendable through each aperture for fixing the biologic strut to the cleat assemblies.

14. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 12 wherein the set screws are extended through each aperture after a distractive force separates the cleat assemblies to achieve a desired vertebral alignment.

15. (Original) A vertebral implant system for interposition in a variable space between two vertebral endplates to create a desired vertebral alignment, the implant system comprising:

a tubular body having a first opposite end and a second opposite end, the tubular body sized to span at least a portion of the space between the vertebral endplates;

a first cleat assembly comprising a first spiked end wall for attaching the first cleat assembly to one of the vertebral endplates and a first side wall defining a first hollow bore for slidably passing the first opposite end through the first cleat assembly;

a second cleat assembly comprising a second spiked end wall for attaching the second cleat assembly to the other vertebral endplate and a second side wall defining second hollow bore for slidably passing the second opposite end through the second cleat assembly,

16. (Original) The system of claim 15 further comprising an attachment system for fixing the first and second cleat assemblies to the tubular body after the first and second cleat assemblies have been attached to the vertebral endplates.

17. (Original) The system of claim 16 wherein the attachment system comprises at least one threaded aperture in each of the first and second side walls and a set screw extendable through each of the threaded apertures.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17 wherein the set screws are extended through each of the threaded apertures after a distracting force varies the space between vertebral endplates to create the desired vertebral alignment.

19. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the first cleat assembly is slidably passed over the first opposite end and the second cleat assembly is slidably passed over the second opposite end with the first spiked end wall directed toward the first opposite end and the second spiked end wall directed toward the second opposite end and wherein the spiked endwalls do not extend beyond the first and second opposite ends.

20. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein one or more openings, sized to permit graft material entry into the first hollow bore, extend through the first sidewall.

21. (Original) A method for inserting a vertebral implant between two vertebral endplates, wherein the vertebral implant comprises a pair of cleat assemblies and a tubular body, the method comprising:

sliding the cleat assemblies over the tubular body;

inserting the vertebral implant between the vertebral endplates;

interposing a distracting device between the cleat assemblies;

applying a distracting force with the distracting device whereby at least one of the cleat assemblies is moved into engagement with at least one of the vertebral endplates.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21 further comprising:

responsive to the distractive force, expanding a space between the two vertebral endplates; and

attaching each cleat assembly to the tubular body with an attachment mechanism to maintain the expanded spacing.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the attachment mechanism is a set screw.

24. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein during the insertion of the vertebral implant, the cleat assemblies do not extend past the ends of the tubular body.